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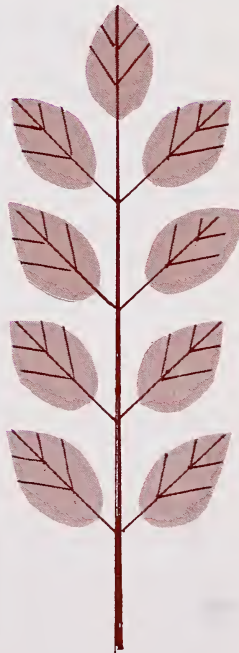
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# PLANT QUARANTINES

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# why we need **PLANT QUARANTINES**

Plant pests and diseases now cost Americans approximately \$12 billion a year in damage to crops, forests, and ornamental shrubs. Many of these pests—which include insects, nematodes, snails, mites, and plant diseases—are not native to America. Instead, they “hitchhiked” to this country from abroad before plant quarantines were established.

The need for plant quarantines to prevent the international spread of plant pests is greater today than ever, because the danger of pests spreading has increased with the huge expansion of travel and trade that has occurred in recent years.

## **An Age-Old Problem**

The problem itself is not new, however. Plant pests have plagued man since early times. Biblical stories tell of famines in the Old World caused by locusts and other destructive insects. But before the coming of the white man, North America was relatively free of many of the more destructive plant pests we know today.

Early colonists brought insects in their feed and seed and plant diseases on shrubs that they brought to beautify their new homes. One such plant disease, stem rust fungus, came on barberry bushes brought to Massachusetts



before 1726. This plant disease, which also destroys small grain, spread westward in the 1860's. One stem rust fungus epidemic caused the loss of 200 million bushels of wheat.

Another small grain pest, the hessian fly, was brought to America during the Revolutionary War in bedding carried by German soldiers hired by the British to fight the colonists. In the long run, the hessian fly turned out to be far more damaging than the German mercenaries. For the insect spread Westward and, along with stem rust fungus, it is blamed for precipitating wheatless days for civilians during World War I.

## The Problem Grows

These are only two of many such examples. Dozens of other insects and plant diseases were brought to this country by early colonists. During the 18th and 19th centuries many others came with agricultural cargoes and travelers' luggage.

However, long, slow ocean voyages limited travel until recent years. As the speed and ease of travel increased, travel and trade grew rapidly. This greatly increased the danger of spreading damaging plant pests from one country to another in cargo and passengers' baggage.



Bushes brought over by colonists carried stem rust fungus, a serious small grain disease shown above.

## The Problem Today

Modern jet airplanes whisk people from one country or continent to another in a matter of a few minutes or a few hours. Plant pests carried in food supplies or in fruit, plants, or souvenirs that passengers carry arrive in the United States healthy and ready to attack our basic food, forests, and ornamentals.

At the present time, the number of travelers arriving at U.S. ports of entry each year equals the total population of the United States, and the number is constantly increasing.

In order to protect America's crops, forests, and ornamentals in the face of this increased threat of foreign pest invasion, U.S. Department of Agriculture plant quarantine inspectors cooperate with customs officials in the inspection of nearly 40 million pieces of incoming baggage a year. They inspect countless shipments of cargo and the ships, airplanes, and freight cars used to carry it. They also cooperate with postal officials in the inspection of more than 68 million packages from abroad annually. As a result of this work, plant quarantine inspectors now stop an incoming plant pest of quarantine significance on an average of once every 12 minutes around the clock throughout the year.





# how PLANT QUARANTINES work

Before the end of the 19th century most major nations, except the United States, enacted plant quarantines to protect their agricultural resources. This country actually became a “dumping ground” for infested nursery stock that other nations would not accept.

## Enactment of Plant Quarantines

Congress provided the basic legislation for U.S. plant quarantines in 1912 by passing the Plant Quarantine Act. It became effective on August 20, 1912, and gave the Secretary of Agriculture authority to make and enforce plant quarantines to protect American agriculture.

The original Plant Quarantine Act has been amended several times to make it more effective. Other major legislation affecting plant quarantine work is the Honeybee Act of 1922, Mexican Border Act of 1942, the Department of Agriculture Organic Act of 1944, and the Federal Plant Pest Act of 1957.

## Enforcement of Quarantines

Inspectors in the Plant Quarantine Division of the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, enforce this country's plant quarantines. These inspectors are stationed at major U.S. airports, seaports, and





Modern jets span the oceans in a few hours, greatly increasing the danger of introducing plant pests.

border crossings where they form the country's first line of defense against foreign plant pests. Most inspectors have college degrees before entering plant quarantine work. They receive intensive training in inspection techniques and identification of plant pests.

The Plant Quarantine Division enforces a number of plant quarantines that restrict or prohibit entry into the United States of plants, insects, soil, and plant products from foreign countries where damaging agricultural pests are known to exist. These regulations also provide for treatments (such as fumigation) of shipments to remove pest hazards. The Division also enforces several plant quarantines which regulate movement of plants, plant products, and soil between the State of Hawaii and the Mainland, between Puerto Rico, the American Virgin Islands, and Guam, and between these areas and the Mainland.

In addition, the Plant Quarantine Division certifies U.S. agricultural exports to meet the phytosanitary import requirements of the foreign country to which they are being shipped.

In order to do this, the Plant Quarantine Division maintains a file of approximately 150 different countries' plant quarantine importation requirements. Summaries of these laws are supplied to American exporters upon request.



Plants and fruits in travelers' luggage often carry damaging foreign pests.



Inspection and treatment of imported plants closes this avenue of possible pest introduction.

## Handling of Commercial Shipments

Products imported commercially are safeguarded by a system of permits, inspection, and treatment (if necessary) to eliminate foreign plant pests. Quarantine procedures are designed to allow the greatest possible freedom of trade that is consistent with protection of this country's food, forests, and fiber. When treatment of the material is required as a condition of entry, the treatment must meet plant quarantine standards.

Anyone wishing more information on commercial importations should contact the Plant Quarantine Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

# WHAT TRAVELERS SHOULD DO

Tourists' luggage represents one of the major ways that plant pests travel from one country to another. It is impractical to require that travelers' luggage be treated in the same manner as commercial shipments, so cooperation by the individual tourist is necessary to prevent the spread of plant pests.

Few travelers attempt to smuggle plants or plant products into the United States. But thousands bring fruits or plants without realizing the danger of spreading plant pests or the huge losses that plant pests cause. Innocent-looking souvenirs, if stuffed with contaminated straw or made from dried fruit, may also carry plant pests.

## Importing Plant Material

Travelers may bring admissible plants to the United States if they have a permit. They should apply for such a permit as far in advance of their trip as possible. Regulations vary, depending on the plant material involved, the country of origin, and the plant pests present in that country.

In some cases, a permit and an inspection is all that is needed to import plants or plant materials. In other cases, special treatments at the port of entry may be required. Plants from certain countries may be imported only under post-entry quarantine. (See below.) A plant is denied entry into the United States only when there is no safe, practical method of eliminating the pest risk. However, small lots of fruits and vegetables that cannot be satisfactorily

treated are subject to seizure at ports of entry. Soil on the roots of plants is prohibited entry into the United States. Soil samples are permitted entry only under a special permit and are treated upon arrival to remove pest hazards. Unprocessed meats and meat products are prohibited entry from most foreign countries because of damaging animal diseases.

Travelers will receive specific information about treatments, restrictions, or prohibitions that apply when they inquire about import permits. To obtain more information or to apply for a permit to import plants or plant materials, write to the Plant Quarantine Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

## Postentry Quarantine

Postentry quarantine is applied to plants from certain countries known to have dangerous plant diseases that can be detected only in the growing plant. In such cases, the importer must agree to allow agricultural inspectors to examine the growing plant for a specified length of time (usually two full growing seasons) after its arrival in the United States. At the end of that time, healthy plants are released from all restrictions. However, the importer must agree in advance to allow authorities to destroy any plants found to be diseased during the quarantine period. Travelers who wish to import plants subject to postentry quarantine will be given details on this procedure when they apply for their permits.

## Remember These Important Points

**DO NOT** bring or send agricultural materials, such as fruits, vegetables, plants, bulbs, seeds, cuttings, meat, or meat products to the United States unless you have inquired about the entry status of such materials and obtained a permit.

**REPORT** all fruits, plants, bulbs, seeds, cuttings, meat, meat products, or other agricultural material in your possession to Agricultural Quarantine or Customs officials upon arrival in the United States.

**OBTAIN** information about admissible plant materials and permits as far in advance of your trip as possible if you wish to bring plants or plant materials to this country from abroad. For information or permits, write to the Plant Quarantine Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

*Pestina Says:*

**HELP  
STOP  
the spread of  
PLANT PESTS**



*Plant Quarantine Division  
Agricultural Research Service  
Revised June 1969*